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## V CORPS TASK FORCE 'TOOK THE GLOVES OFF' FOR FALLUJAH OPERATION

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**FALLUJAH, Iraq** — Looking west down into Fallujah from its eastern flank in early November, U.S. troops watched as bombs dropped and artillery whistled by overhead, crashing down and creating a haze of smoke blanketing the insurgent-controlled city.

Soon their counterparts from a task force led by V Corps' 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry would create a breach through which Army and Marine elements would pour into the city to begin an assault, purging the dug-in and determined insurgency and turning the city back over to the people of Iraq.



SGT KIMBERLY SNOW

Soldiers from the 3rd Brigade Reconnaissance Troop of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division move in to clear house in Fallujah, Iraq during Operation Al-Fajr.

The hastily assembled task force was deployed to Fallujah at the request the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, stationed at a camp about 10 kilometers west of the city. It was comprised primarily of about 650 Soldiers from several units from V

Corps' 1st Infantry Division: the 2/2nd; the 2nd Battalion, 63rd Armor; the 1st Battalion, 6th Field Artillery; the 82nd Engineer Battalion, and the 3rd Brigade Reconnaissance Troop.

On the eve of battle, Task Force 2-2 Commander Lt. Col. Peter Newell gathered the troops around him

"This is as pure a fight of good versus evil as we will probably see in our lifetime," he said. "And there is nobody in the world better at what's going to happen than you."

They knew the movement of such a large force into Camp Fallujah would not go undetected. The combat force alone consisted of about 100 vehicles. They assumed the enemy was also preparing for the assault.

"Yeah, they know we're coming," said 1st Lt. Karl E. Gregory, a platoon leader with Alpha Company, 2/2nd. "But to tell you the truth, I don't think it matters whether they know we're coming or not. I don't think there's anything they can do to stop us."

By the evening of Nov. 11, the northern half of the city had been secured. A Marine element took over so Task Force 2-2 could move south.

Despite the use of extensive underground tunnel and bunker systems and being unusually well equipped -- enemy fighters were reported to be wearing flak vests, helmets and using sophisticated weapon systems -- U.S. and Iraqi forces defeated the insurgency in only two weeks.

In the end, Task Force 2-2 destroyed more than 300 enemy fighters and detained 45. They also destroyed five vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and found around 40 weapon caches, two IED factories and a VBIED factory.

Although Newell said he never doubted the outcome, he didn't expect the battle to end so quickly.

And he couldn't be more proud of his troops' achievements.

"I saw some things that I don't think anyone not there could ever really understand," said Newell.

"I'm talking about the heroics of individuals in the midst of chaos. I don't think that anyone who wasn't there could really capture that."

Newell attributed the success of the operation in part to the support given to the task force, particularly by the 1st Infantry Division.

"This is probably the first time since the Vietnam War that we were told to take the gloves off and just go in and do what we have to do to win," said Newell. "Never once did I have to say 'I need' or 'I want.'"

But success did not come without great cost. Four Soldiers gave the ultimate sacrifice -- battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Steven Faulkenburg; Alpha Company executive officer 1st Lt. Edward Iwan; Alpha Company commander Capt. Sean Sims, and scout platoon team leader Sgt. James Matteson.

